

TESTIMONY

of

REPRESENTATIVE STAN PARRIS

before the

POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Hearing on

FISCAL YEAR 1986 BUDGET PROPOSALS

February 23, 1985

MADAME CHAIR, I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE HOUSE POST OFFICE CIVIL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED FY 86 BUDGET CHANGES FOR FEDERAL WORKERS AND RETIREES. DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE CIVIL SERVICE HAS BEEN FACED WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF NEW PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, THIS YEAR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING THIS OCTOBER ARE PARTICULARLY DRACONIAN.

I RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR BUDGET RESTRAINT AND I STRONGLY SUPPORT DEFICIT-REDUCTION MEASURES, BUT AS I HAVE SAID ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, ACTIVE AND RETIRED GOVERNMENT WORKERS HAVE ALREADY MADE THEIR FAIR SHARE OF SACRIFICES. THIS YEAR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FURTHER PUNISHES AN ALREADY EMBATTLED FEDERAL WORKFORCE - NOT TO MENTION THAT MOST OF THE PROPOSALS WOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO IMPACT ON REDUCING THE FISCAL 1986 BUDGET DEFICIT. IT WOULD TAKE A NUMBER OF YEARS BEFORE THE IMPACT OF SUCH CHANGES WOULD MAKE THEMSELVES FELT.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF THESE PROPOSALS WOULD BE DEVASTATING TO AN EMPLOYEE, SAY IN MY DISTRICT, WHO HAS A FAMILY TO FEED AND CHILDREN TO SEND TO COLLEGE IN AN AREA WITH ONE OF THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF LIVING IN THE COUNTRY. FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW, GOVERNMENT WORKERS HAVE RECEIVED LIMITED AND DELAYED PAY INCREASES, HAVE HAD SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS IN HEALTH BENEFITS WHILE THEIR PREMIUMS HAVE INCREASED, AND HAVE HAD TO PAY A MEDICARE TAX, JUST TO MENTION A FEW EXAMPLES. NOW THE ADMINISTRATION EXPECTS EMPLOYEES TO WORK AN EXTRA TEN YEARS,

ACCEPT A PENSION COMPUTATION CHANGE, THROW AWAY ACCUMULATED SICK LEAVE AT RETIREMENT, AND TAKE A FIVE PERCENT PAY CUT - A PROPOSAL LAST TRIED DURING THE 1930s IN THE MIDST OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION. MOREOVER, THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET HAS PROPOSED THE ELIMINATION OF 25,000 JOBS IN FEDERAL REGIONAL AND FIELD OFFICES IN TEN DIFFERENT AGENCIES, THE BULK COMING FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION.

THIS IS A SIMPLE MATTER OF EQUITY. HOW MUCH LONGER CAN WE MAKE THESE DEMANDS ON FEDERAL WORKERS AND EXPECT THEM TO STAY IN THEIR JOBS OR PERFORM PRODUCTIVELY? SINCE I RETURNED TO THE CONGRESS FOUR YEARS AGO, I HAVE BEEN PREDICTING THAT THESE TYPES OF PROPOSALS WILL RESULT IN A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMPRISED OF PEOPLE WHO CAN'T GET JOBS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

MADAME CHAIR, I REGRET THIS IS NO LONGER A MATTER OF PREDICTING THE FUTURE. CIVIL SERVANTS ARE LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT IN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS, TOP COLLEGE GRADUATES ARE BEING DISCOURAGED FROM MAKING CIVIL SERVICE A CAREER, AND LIFE-TIME FEDERAL EMPLOYEES ARE TAKING EARLY RETIREMENT. EFFORTS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN SKILLED, CAPABLE PEOPLE IN FEDERAL SERVICE HAVE BEEN SEVERELY REDUCED. AS A RESULT, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS BECOMING LESS RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE TO THE NEEDS OF EVERYONE.

I COMMEND THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR ITS EFFORTS AND URGE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO HAVE THESE PROPOSALS WITHDRAWN FROM FY 86 BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS.